DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 079 074 SE 016 147

AUTHOR Horn, B. Ray
TITLE Michigan Does It Again.
PUB DATE May 73
NOTE 6p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS Educational Planning; *Environmental Education; Essays; *Master Plans; State of the Art Reviews; State Programs; *Statewide Planning

ABSTRACT

Research activities, public meetings, and citizen input leading up to the development and writing of a state plan for environmental education in Michigan are reviewed in this essay. A general summary of the plan itself indicates values underlying planning activities, signals current problems and efforts, tells how the plan was developed, and details goals and priorities. In addition, the plan lists recommendations, identifies constraints to fulfilling recommendations, and suggests ways to overcome the constraints. It also lists guidelines for distributing and evaluating its proposals and provides a glossary to define general terms. (BL)

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

ED 079074

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

MICHIGAN DOES IT AGAIN

by

B. Ray Horn

Planning Coordinator/Executive Director
Governor's Environmental Education Task Force
Executive Office of the Governor
State of Michigan

Could it really be--that millions of people could become interested enough in local environmental problems to spend Saturday afternoons solving them?

Governor William G. Milliken's Task Force on Environmental Education, which wrote Michigan's Environmental Future: A Master Plan for Environmental Education, says "Yes." Michigan, first to pass a state Environmental Protection Act in 1970, has done it again. With the assistance of a planning grant from the United States Office of Education, the Governor's Task Force has written an environmental education plan in a unique way, unprecedented anywhere.

"Basic to the solution of our environmental problems is our understanding of environmental relationships. We can help create this understanding by establishing a program for environmental education . . . ," stated Governor Milliken in his 1971 Message to the Legislature on the Environment.

How was the plan written? "At the request of citizen groups, the Governor appointed 19 people with a variety of backgrounds to write a plan," reports William B. Stapp, Professor of Environmental Education at the University of Michigan and Chairman of the Governor's Task Force.

The members of the Governor's Task Force outlined two choices for writing a state plan. They could write it themselves, and then sponsor hearings for public reaction (the approach taken by most government groups), or they could hold public meetings before writing the first draft.

"But we're the people who are served by the plan," proclaimed prominent citizen activists, "and we're the people who will have to pay for the plan, and carry it out." Agreeing with the citizens, the Task Force chose to meet with the public first.

A public meeting was held in each major region of the state. Each meeting consisted of small group discussions which were taped for later review by the Task Force. Each small group also

ED 016 147

submitted a written summary of its discussion to be considered at later regional meetings. The goal was to continue to build citizen input into the plan. "The quality of input was high," commented Dr. Stapp, "and many new ideas were offered to the Task Force."

"I heard about the meeting on the radio," reported a Detroit teacher, "and I went to find out what environmental education was. Other teachers had been talking about it. And I was curious. I thought I would have to sit in the corner of a crowded room and hear experts read long papers. I was wrong. Instead, I found myself having coffee with other people like me --bankers, teachers, businessmen, steel workers, and students.

"I really got involved," she continued. "They were asking me questions about my problems. I had so much to say that time went fast--the all-day meeting seemed to last minutes. I was glad it was Saturday so I could attend. Everybody seemed to have some of the same problems--even the man from industry. We told the Task Force about them, and suggested ways to solve them."

Between the four regional meetings, the Task Force received other ideas by mail, further researched the state's needs, and wrote criteria for evaluating ideas.

Six months before the public meetings, the Task Force had gleaned broad goals for environmental education from the professional literature and experts in the field. The goals were compiled and added to a questionnaire--mailed to 600 people across the state--to assess the status of environmental education in Michigan. At the regional meetings, the participants refined these goals.

Results from the meetings and questionnaires were studied and the plan's first draft was written. The draft was then mailed to everyone who attended the meetings or who corresponded with the Task Force. Everyone was then invited to attend another widely publicized statewide conference where the draft would again be reviewed by small groups.

Throughout the months following this final public meeting, many subsequent drafts were written and rewritten to make the plan fit the state's needs precisely. Special meetings were also held to refine sections aimed at specific groups.

Before the plan was presented to the Governor, the public was again invited to review a final draft. Copies were deposited in state libraries. Personal invitations to review the draft were sent to everyone who contacted the Task Force, or attended related activities in the state. Meanwhile, 150 professional educators and planners received the draft and were asked to comment. A consensus plan resulted and was submitted to the Governor in January, 1973.

The development of the plan followed a specific sequence: Task Force appointed, questionnaires mailed, four regional meetings held, first draft written, statewide conference held, draft rewritten, draft reviewed by the general public and professional consultants, final plan written, plan submitted to Governor, and budgetary requests made.

What does the plan include? "The basic premise on which the plan is built concerns the broad nature of education in our society," observed Don Ibrecht, a university student and Task Force member. "The plan points out that no one in the state escapes environmental education. Watching television you see commercials and programs that relate to environmental values. School children and college students learn through activities in and out of the classroom. They learn environmental values by watching what others do. And they learn from examples set by teachers, parents, and community leaders."

More specifically, however, the plan asks: Exactly what are people learning? What environmental knowledge do they need? Where can they get it? How can they organize themselves to use this knowledge to help solve community problems?

"To begin to answer these questions," reports Dr. Stapp, "the Task Force identified nine objectives." They were:

1. To develop a rationale for having a plan.

2. To develop a way for citizens, individually or collectively, to affect planning efforts.

3. To assess current environmental education efforts in Michigan.

4. To specify environmental education goals for Michigan.

5. To organize the state's efforts in working toward environmental education goals.

6. To make recommendations to appropriate groups in order to determine and initiate actions which will lead to environmental education goals.

7. To identify and rank environmental education priorities for requesting and allocating Michigan's current and future environmental education resources.

8. To design ways to evaluate the long-range effectiveness of state environmental education planning efforts.

9. To write a planning report and design strategies to encourage the adoption of its recommendations.

Statewide long-term goals, in the words of the plan, are "to develop in each Michigan citizen (a) an awareness, understanding, and concern for the environment with its associated problems, and (b) the knowledge, skill, motivation, and commitment to work toward solutions to these current and projected problems."

The scope of the educational process in America is not confined to elementary and secondary schools. It includes "non-formal" educational media, such as radio, television, the press, industrial bulletins, professional journals, newsletters, advertising, conversation, and personal example.

For this reason, the first impression one gets from reading the report is its completeness. There are specific recommendations for agriculture, business and industry, citizen organizations, elementary and secondary schools, government, higher education, individual citizens, labor, mass communication, professional and trade associations, religious organizations, and youth organizations. The plan first addresses all groups, then speaks to each group separately.

The plan aims to coordinate the environmental communication, education, and information programs of all individuals and organizations in the state. Only when we begin to fit the parts of society back together will we get insight into the way the world works, and begin to solve problems.

A second impression one gets while reading the plan concerns learning how to solve problems, not only now, but also in the future. "Environmental education," Dr. Stapp emphasizes, "focuses on problem-solving techniques aimed at real problems in the local community as they are felt today or are anticipated in the future." Governor Milliken stressed the importance of not only looking at today, but also looking ahead: "In short, we must begin to look systematically into the future or we will forever grope with the crises of the moment." The plan is long-range.

Most such plans are short-range. They are limited to removing the visible symptoms of the environmental crisis and fail to give people the know-how to prevent yet unknown problems. Michigan's plan stretches from the now to the yet unknowns.

Another thought generated by the plan is its sensitivity to changing needs. "Structured into the plan is on-going public evaluation through a Citizens Advisory Board which meets monthly," reports Dr. Stapp. "Also included is the requirement that a revised edition of the plan be published every five years." Each new edition will be subjected to the same public review process used for the original plan. The five year planning cycle allows time for systematic research on changing attitudes and needs. With such flexibility built in, the plan is sensitive to change.

The priorities for distributing Michigan's environmental resources are spelled out in detail in the plan, but they are designed to change with changing needs and resources. According to Dr. Stapp, "The present priorities are aimed at groups with the greatest immediate needs for environmental education benefits: the groups who suffer most from environmental blight and who are the least organized to solve the problems they endure." Michigan's priorities are based on people's information needs, not on a region's physical needs, although the two are usually related.

What are the key recommendations of the plan? Michigan's citizens generated 102 specific recommendations for action. Most are intended to be completed voluntarily and cooperatively by private and public groups, organizations, or individuals. State authorization is needed to implement only a few of the key recommendations.

Two principal recommendations are that the Governor establish in his office a State Environmental Education Council and a Citizens Advisory Board to centralize and coordinate programs in cooperation with the State Department of Education. The State Council would also coordinate programs outside the current activities of the Department of Education, such as the environmental information programs of industry.

In summary, Michigan's new state plan spells out the values underlying planning activities, signals current problems and efforts, tells how the plan was developed, and details goals and priorities. The plan also lists recommendations, identifies constraints to fulfilling recommendations, and suggests ways to overcome the constraints. And the plan lists guidelines for distributing and evaluating its proposals and provides a glossary to define general terms.

How can other states begin to develop a plan? Other states writing a new plan, or up-dating their old plans, may obtain a copy of Michigan's Environmental Future: A Master Plan for Environmental Education from the Executive Office of the Governor (Capitol Building, Lansing, Michigan 48903). Assistance and information may also be obtained from the Office of Environmental Education (U.S. Office of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202).

Michigan's plan is bold. Its implications are far-reaching. The Task Force is convinced that only through an environmentally literate citizenry can a healthy Michigan environment be attained and maintained, and that children and adults alike can only be as healthy as the environment permits.

"Think of the environment of the State of Michigan as a huge classroom," says Dr. Stapp, "and think of every citizen and organization as learners engaged in critical thinking about what has to happen if we are going to solve our environmental problems. What we are into here is a statewide environmental encounter. It is much broader in scope and has a longer time-span than the encounter projects that individual teachers and students can design within schools, but that is the only difference. Educational mini-encounters conducted in conjunction with classwork develop youngsters prepared for real maxi-encounters of the kind now facing all Michigan citizens. Once enough educators, citizens, legislators, and agency officials make this connection between educational, environmental, and governmental issues, we can solve the problems that are now lowering the quality of our environment. I think it can be done."

Listening to Chairman Stapp and the Task Force, you suddenly realize how much is yet to be done. You feel important. You know you're on the leading edge of an idea of tremendous significance.

Lansing, Michigan
May, 1973